

# Mūla,pariyāya Sutta

## The Discourse on the Root Teaching

[The nature of primary causes or concepts]

(Majjhima Nikāya 1/1:1-6)

Translated by Piya Tan ©2003

### Introduction

#### 1 Related suttas

The Mūla,pariyāya Sutta analyses the perceptual processes of different types of individuals. It has a very close Chinese version in the Ekottara Āgama (EĀ 44.6)<sup>1</sup> with a similar title, “the root of all things” (一切諸法之本), which agrees with the Pali version in locating the discourse at Ukkaṭṭhā (優迦羅). A close presentation is also found in a Madhyama Āgama discourse and an individual Chinese translation (outside of the four Āgamas), but they differ enough to suggest that they go back to a different original.<sup>2</sup> As **Analayo** notes, it is likely

that the Buddha gave an exposition similar to the Mūlapariyāya Sutta on another occasion. In fact, another instance of a similar exposition occurs **the Brahma,nimantaṇika Sutta** [5],<sup>3</sup> indicating that the Buddha undertook a similar type of analysis on more than one occasion.

(2005 ad M 1:6; emphasis added)

One might also add **the Pañca-t,taya Sutta** (M 102)<sup>4</sup> as another example of an exposition (albeit shorter and with a different emphasis) given by the Buddha similar to **the Brahma,jāla Sutta** (D 1).<sup>5</sup>

The Mūla,pariyāya Sutta should be studied with the Mūla,pariyāya Jātaka (J 245) and the Gotamaka Cetiya Sutta (A 3.123). In his *Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge*, K N Jayatilleke states that

We believe that *mūla*- here means the ‘root cause or the primary causes of the world. It is in this sense that the word is used at Aitareya Āraṇyaka 2.1.8.1, where the cosmological theory that water is the first or primary cause of the world is mooted and it is said that “this (water) was the *root* (cause) and that (ie the world) was the *shoot* (ie the effect)” (*etad vai mūlam adas tūlam*). In this Sutta we observe that this theory is mentioned along with a number of such cosmological theories. *Pariyāya* means “the nature of” as at Sn 581.<sup>6</sup> Mūlapariyāya Sutta, therefore, probably means “the discourse on the nature of primary causes or concepts”. (1963:55)

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<sup>1</sup> EĀ 44.6 = T2.766a-b, which prob belongs to the Mahāsaṅghika (Mayeda 1985:102), “a tradition that formed a distinct Buddhist school right after the second council and out of which later the Mahāyāna developed. Hence for a discourse from a collection that must have passed on separately since the time of the second council to agree closely with the Pāli version is a strong testimony for the authenticity of the Mūlapariyāya Sutta and the fidelity of the early Buddhist oral tradition” (**Analayo** 2005 ad M 1:16), and in his fn, adds: “The present study there shows that the conclusion drawn by Minh Chau 1991:204 [that the Mūla,pariyāya S was a Mahāyāna text “included in the Pāli Tipiṭaka, perhaps by mere inadvertence”], based on comparing M 1 with MĀ 106, need to be revised once EĀ 44.6 is also taken into account.” (id)

<sup>2</sup> MĀ 106 = T1.596b-c & T56 = T1.851a-b (tr Dharmarakṣa, 265-316 CE) respectively, and both have Jeta,vana at Sāvathī as their venue. MĀ 106 has the title, “on perception,” 想經, and T56 has the title, “on delighting in perception” 樂想經. MĀ 106 & T56 have been discussed in some detail by Thich Minh Chau 1991:35, 204, 211-214.

<sup>3</sup> M 49/1:329 (SD 11.7) & MĀ = T1.547b13.

<sup>4</sup> M 102/2:228-238.

<sup>5</sup> D 1/1:1-46.

<sup>6</sup> *Tasmā dhīrā na socanti viditvā loka,pariyāyam*. Therefore the wise do not grieve, knowing the cause of the nature of the world. (Sn 581)

As such, this sutta also has affinity with such suttas as **the Brahma,jāla Sutta** (D 1), which interestingly enough is the first suttas of the Dīgha Nikāya (opening the Sutta Piṭaka), just as the Mūla,pariyāya Sutta opens the Majjhima Nikāya (the second collection of the Sutta Piṭaka). If the Brahmajāla Sutta forms a philosophical prolegomenon to what Buddhism has to offer as exemplified in the Dīgha texts, then the Mūlapariyāya Sutta is a spiritual prologue to the Majjhima teachings. It should also be studied with **the Aggañña Sutta** (D 27).

## 2 Conceit

**2.1 THE PRIDE OF LEARNING.** The Majjhima Commentary says that the Buddha delivered this discourse to dispel the pride and conceit that had arisen in 500 monks on account of their Vedic learning and intellectual mastery of the Buddha's teachings. These monks were formerly brahmins learned in Vedic literature. The subtle nuances of this discourse are intended to loosen the grip of brahmanical views to which they may be clinging to. As eternal teachings, the suttas today address our own narrow "brahminical" views of Buddhism whether in regards to the Dharma or the Abhidharma or Buddhism in general. Their purpose is remind us of the ultimate purpose of the spiritual life—that of wisdom, liberation and joyful peace.

This sutta is unique in that it is the only sutta that ends with the monks "not approving" of it. The monks were not happy with this discourse because they were faced with an open challenge by the Buddha that they should deal with their own pride and arrogance. The Majjhima Commentary also contains **the Mūla,pariyāya Jātaka**,<sup>7</sup> which the Buddha expounds to these 500 monks a short while later. After listening to this Jātaka, the monks thought, "In the past as well we were knocked down because of conceit" and were humbled (MA 1:59).<sup>8</sup>

The Majjhima Commentary remarks that the monks did not understand the sutta despite the excellent and melodious voice of the Buddha and his well-taught discourse, for it was for them "like delicious food placed before a man with his mouth bound by a thick broad cloth". The Buddha nevertheless taught it "for the purpose of shattering their conceit" (MA 1:56). What is truly interesting is that the sutta is, on the contrary, not difficult at all (although the subject is profound) but the 500 monks were blinded by their conceit. After all, it was after listening to the Mūla,pariyāya Jātaka, that their conceit is removed, which then led them to understand the sutta in retrospect.

As such, this sutta should not be summarily dismissed as being "difficult" (which it is not at all) but to be read reflectively just as it is with **the Mūla,pariyāya Jātaka** (J 245) and **the Gotamaka Cetiya Sutta** (A 3.123) (which concludes it) as reminders that we should keep to the "middle" of the Middle Way and keep clear of manufacturing new systems and self-conceived notions. Instead we should work towards the liberating Dharma as theory, practice and goal. There is also a very short (**Bhagava**) **Mūlaka Sutta**<sup>9</sup> that answers the question, "What is the root of all things?"

**2.2 "THE MONKS DID NOT JOYFULLY APPROVE."** The closing of the Mūla,pariyāya Sutta has been a subject of some controversy, for it is unique in closing thus:

This is what the Blessed One said. The monks did *not* joyfully approve of the Blessed One's word.<sup>10</sup> [§194]

This presentation is supported by the sutta's Ekottara Āgama parallel.<sup>11</sup> This unusually unique ending is known to the Pali Commentaries. They explain that the Buddha has given this discourse to humble a

<sup>7</sup> J 245; MA 1:57-59.

<sup>8</sup> The introduction to the Jātaka however states that the Jātaka was related not to the 500 monks, but *in reference* to them, after they had become arhats.

<sup>9</sup> A 10.18/5:106 f.

<sup>10</sup> Be Ce Na te bhikkhū bhagavato bhāsitaṃ abhinanduntī. Se Na attamanā te bhikkhū bhagavato bhāsitaṃ abhinandun ti. PTS ed has wr: Attamanā te bhikkhū Bhagavato bhāsitaṃ abhinandun ti. As such, only the PTS ed (M 1:6,24) state that the monks delight in the discourse.

<sup>11</sup> EĀ 44.6 = T2.766b15 says "all the monks did not accept that teaching," 諸比丘木受其教.

group of 500 monks who, being formerly learned brahmins, have developed conceit on account of their intellectual mastery of the Teaching. They do *not* delight in the teaching because they have been unable to understand what the Buddha has taught them.<sup>12</sup> The monks do not delight in this sutta, as such, because: (1) they had pride and conceit (thinking they have mastered the Teaching); and (2) they held on to remnants of brahminical views.

A number of scholars have proposed an alternative interpretation, that is, they are humbled by their understanding of this discourse and this make them unable to delight in it.<sup>13</sup> The Ekottara Āgama version, however, agrees with the Pali Commentary in that the monks are unable to understand the teaching given by the Buddha because their minds are being obstructed by Māra.<sup>14</sup> The Majjhima Commentary states that in due course, when their pride has been humbled, the Buddha teaches them the **Gotamaka Cetiya Sutta**,<sup>15</sup> as a result of which they all attain arhathood (MA 1:59).

### 3 Delighting in nirvana

The Mūla,pariyāya Sutta is remarkable (even unique) in stating that it presents nirvana as a phenomenon that is prone to lead to conceivings and the notion of “mine.” This is remarkable enough as to contribute to a discussion in **the Kathā,vatthu**, where the Pubbe,seliyas refer to the Mūla,pariyāya Sutta in order to support their opinion that the deathless (*amata*), that is, nirvana, as an object of the mind can become a fetter (*samyojana*) (Kvu 404). **Analayo** gives helpful teachings here,

The thought provoking inclusion of Nibbāna in the present context is explained by the Pāli commentary to refer to wrong notions of Nibbāna, held by those who mistake sensual enjoyment or attainment of a *jhāna* to be Nibbāna.<sup>16</sup> This commentarial explanation is not convincing, since the Mūlapariyāya Sutta instructs the disciple in higher training (*sekha*), the one who already has experienced stream-entry and is practising for the higher stages of awakening, to avoid conceiving and delighting in each phenomenon, and therewith also in regard to Nibbāna [M 1.50/1:4,30]. This instruction would make little sense if the Nibbāna the Buddha had in mind were indeed a wrong notion of Nibbāna. There would have been little need to advise a disciple in higher training, one who has already had a personal and direct experience of the real Nibbāna, to avoid conceivings and delighting in regard to a mistaken notion of Nibbāna, since such conceivings and delight would not occur in the first place.<sup>17</sup> Therefore it seems that the instruction in the Mūlapariyāya Sutta and its Ekottara Āgama parallel had indeed the real Nibbāna in mind.

Though disciples in higher training would certainly not delight in wrong notions of Nibbāna, one might wonder why the Mūlapariyāya Sutta should instruct them to avoid delighting in the real Nibbāna, which is the goal of their aspirations. The same discourse also proclaims that an *arahant* does not delight in Nibbāna, yet of *arahants* one would similarly expect that they continue to delight in Nibbāna. A Dhammapada verse refers to such delight with the almost contradictory expression: “affection for the destruction of craving,”<sup>18</sup>

<sup>12</sup> MA 1:56; also Intro to **Mūla,pariyāya J** (J 2:260). Analayo (2005 ad M 1:6) notes that a similar episode occurs in **Kaśyapa,parivarta**, prob because one of the earliest Mahāyāna texts, which reports that 500 monks are unable to understand a teaching, but later receive a teaching that lead them to full awakening (cf Pasadika, “The Kaśyapa,parivarta,” in *The Tibet Journal* 5,4 1980:52).

<sup>13</sup> Bodhi (1980:20); Nānananda 2004:53; Thanissaro 2002a:156; Analayo 2005 ad M 1:6.

<sup>14</sup> EĀ 44.6 = T2:766b15, which adds that the Buddha then admonishes the monks to meditate and not be negligent, followed by the monks delighting in the Buddha’s word.

<sup>15</sup> A 3.123/1:276.

<sup>16</sup> These come as the 5 *parama diṭṭha,dhamma nibbāna*, the 5 claims to “ultimate *Nibbāna* here and now,” in the Brahma,jāla Sutta, D 1/1:36 (Analayo’s fn).

<sup>17</sup> See K Nānananda 2004:48 (Analayo’s fn).

<sup>18</sup> *Taṇha-k,khaya,rato hoti, sammā,sambuddha,sāvako* (Dh 187) 48 (Analayo’s fn).

The rationale behind the need to refrain from delighting, the Mūlapariyāya Sutta explains, is that delight is a root cause for the arising of *dukkha*.<sup>19</sup> Yet to delight in Nibbāna would seem to lead the disciple in higher training onwards on the path and therewith out of *dukkha*. Moreover the expression “to delight,” *abhinandati*, as such does not necessarily carry negative connotations. It recurs, for example, as part of the standard conclusion of a discourse, reporting the monks “delighting” in what the Buddha had said. Such instances indicate that “to delight” need not necessarily become a root cause for the arising of *dukkha*. (2005 ad M 1:4)

In the Mūlapariyāya Sutta, delight is presented as the climax of various conceivings and imaginings immediately following the perception of nirvana as “mine.” This evidently shows that such a delight is tainted with craving, for which reason, the trainee should avoid, but why the arhat is beyond such delight. The corresponding Ekottara Āgama passage does in fact speak of not being attached to nirvana,<sup>20</sup> instead of not delighting in it, confirming that here the Pali version’s “delight” is used in a mostly negative sense. However, the wholesome context is evident in the case of the trainee and the arhat, since spiritual growth can only occur with the suppression and ending of craving.

#### 4 The three types of full understanding

The Majjhima Commentary mentions the Niddesa doctrine of **the three types of full understanding** (*pariññā*) as the framework of the sutta, that is,

- (1) the full understanding through the known (or diagnosis as knowledge) (*ñāta,pariññā*);
- (2) the full understanding through scrutinization (ie diagnosis as cultivation) (*tīraṇa,pariññā*);<sup>21</sup> and
- (3) the full understanding through abandonment (*pahāna,pariññā*) (Nm 53; Vism 606).

The example of the reflection on the earth element, the Commentary says, shows that one who fully understands earth does so by defining the earth element by way of its unique characteristic, function, manifestation and proximate cause. The full understanding of the scrutinizing of earth is the contemplation of it as having the three universal characteristics of impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and not self. The full understanding through abandonment of earth is realized through the letting go of lustful desire for it, leading to the path of arhathood (MA 1:29).

The three types of full understanding (*pariññā*) closely parallel the canonical three phases (*ti,parivaṭṭa*) of the four noble truths as given in **the Dhamma,cakka-p,pavattana Sutta** (S 56)—namely: (1) the knowledge of each truth (*sacca,ñāṇa*), (2) the knowledge of the task to be done regarding each truth (*kicca,ñāṇa*), and (3) the knowledge of the accomplishment of these tasks (*kata,ñāṇa*)—as applied to the first noble truth, that is to say, the statement of the truth (*sacca*); the fact that it should be fully understood (*pariññeyya*); the fact that it has been fully understood (*pariññāta*) (S 56.11.9-12).

As regards its audience, the sutta describes how four kinds of persons look at the world:

**The ordinary person** (*assutavā puthujjanā*) [3-26] is one who lacks full understanding (*apariññāta*), who at best only has a basic theoretical knowledge of the noble truths (*sacca,ñāṇa*).

**The learner on the path** (*sekha*) [27-50] is a stream-winner, a once-returner or a non-returner, that is, one who is on the way to arhathood and liberation—that is, one who would develop full understanding (*pariññeyya*) of the noble truths.

**The arhat** [51-146] is one liberated from the three unwholesome roots—greed, hate and delusion—through gaining full understanding (*pariññāta*) of the noble truths.

**The Tathāgata** [147-194] is the Buddha who, like the arhats, has not only fully understood (*pariññāta*) the noble truths but also won perfect self-awakening.

The descriptions of the ordinary person, the learner, the arhat (3 aspects) and the Tathāgata (3 aspects) are called the eight stages (*aṭṭha bhūmi*) of knowledge (J 245.2).

<sup>19</sup> *Nandī dukkhassa mūlam* (M 1/1:6,11) 48 (Anālayo’s fn).

<sup>20</sup> EĀ 44.6 = T2.766b4: 不著於涅槃.

<sup>21</sup> “Scrutinization,” *tīraṇa* here is syn with *kicca* (that which should be done) (PED).

## 5 Brahma,nimantanika Sutta

[From *The Middle Discourses of the Buddha*, tr Ñānamoli & Bodhi, 2001:1246 n499. Slightly revised & my emphasis.]

While the Mūla,pariyāya Sutta was delivered by the Buddha at the Subhaga Grove, outside Ukaṭṭhā, the teachings of the **Brahma,nimantanika Sutta** (M 49) were also given by the Buddha at the same venue. This similarity in formulation and theme between these two suttas—along with the **Mūla,pariyāya Jātaka** (J 245), perhaps the only suttas recorded as originating at Ukaṭṭhā—is striking.

It is even possible to see the Brahma,nimantanika Sutta as a dramatic representation of the same ideas set forth by the Mūla,pariyāya Sutta in abstract philosophical terms. Thus, the Brahmā Baka may be taken to represent *being* (*bhava*) or personality (*sakkāya*) in its most eminent form, blindly engaged in the activity of **conceiving** (*maññanā*), sustaining itself by its delusions of permanence, pleasure and selfhood. Underlying being is *craving*, symbolized by Māra—seemingly inconspicuous in the assembly, yet the real author of all the outpourings of conceiving, the one who holds the entire universe in his grip.

The alliance of Brahmā and Māra, God and Satan, an incomparable union from the perspective of Western theism, points to the thirst for continued being as the hidden root of all world affirmation, whether theistic or non-theistic. In the Brahma,nimantanika Sutta itself, the superficial theoretical contest between Baka and the Buddha soon gives way to a gripping deep-level confrontation between Māra and the Buddha—Māra as craving demanding the affirmation of being, the Awakened One pointing to the cessation of being through the uprooting of delight.

## 6 Samkhyā

[Source: Thānissaro Bhikkhu, Mūlapariyāya Sutta tr, 2001 Introd. Slightly edited]

The Buddha taught that clinging to views is one of the four forms of clinging that tie the mind to the processes of suffering. He thus recommended that his followers relinquish their clinging, not only to views in their full-blown form as specific positions, but also in their rudimentary form as the categories and relationships that the mind reads into experience. This is a point he makes in the following discourse, which is apparently his response to a particular school of Brahmanical thought that was developing in his time—the Samkhyā, or classification school.

This school had its beginnings in the thought of **Uddālaka [Āruṇī]**, a ninth-century BCE philosopher who posited a “root”: an abstract principle out of which all things emanated and which was immanent in all things. Philosophers who carried on this line of thinking offered a variety of theories, based on logic and meditative experience, about the nature of the ultimate root and about the hierarchy of the emanation. Many of their theories were recorded in the Upanishads and eventually developed into the classical Samkhyā-system around the time of the Buddha.

Although the present discourse says nothing about the background of the monks listening to it, the Commentary states that before their ordination they were brahmins, and that even after their ordination they continued to interpret the Buddha’s teachings in light of their previous training, which may well have been proto-Samkhyā. If this is so, then the Buddha’s opening lines—“I will teach you the sequence of the root of all phenomena”—would have them prepared to hear his contribution to their line of thinking. And, in fact, the list of topics he covers reads like a Buddhist Samkhyā. Parallelling the classical Samkhyā, it contains 24 items, begins with the physical world (here, the four physical properties), and leads back through ever more refined and inclusive levels of being and experience, culminating with the ultimate Buddhist concept: nirvana (*nibbāna*). In the pattern of Samkhyā thought, Nirvana would thus be the ultimate “root” or ground of being immanent in all things and out of which they all emanate.

However, instead of following this pattern of thinking, the Buddha attacks it at its very root: the notion of a principle in the abstract, the “in” (immanence) and “out of” (emanation) superimposed on experience. Only an uninstructed, run of the mill person, he says, would read experience in this way. In contrast, a person in training should look for a different kind of “root”—the root of suffering experienced in the present—and find it in the act of delight. Developing dispassion for that delight, the trainee can then comprehend the process of coming-into-being for what it is, drop all participation in it, and thus achieve true awakening.

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## The Discourse on the Root Teaching

(M 1/1:1-6)

[1]

1 Thus have I heard.

At one time the Blessed One was staying at the foot of the royal sal tree in the Subhaga Grove<sup>22</sup> near Ukkaṭṭhā.<sup>23</sup>

Then the Blessed One addressed the monks, “Bhikshus!”

“Venerable sir!” the monks answered the Blessed One in assent.

The Blessed One said this:

2 “I will show you, bhikshus, the exposition<sup>24</sup> on the root of all things.<sup>25</sup> Listen, pay close attention to it, I will speak.”

“Yes, venerable sir.” The monks answered the Blessed One in assent.

The Blessed One said this:

### I. THE IGNORANT ORDINARY PERSON

#### The 4 elements

3 “Here, bhikshus, an ignorant ordinary person<sup>26</sup> who has no regard for noble ones<sup>27</sup> and is unskilled and undisciplined in their Dharma, who has no regard for the true persons<sup>28</sup> and is unskilled and undisciplined in their Dharma, perceives<sup>29</sup> **earth** as earth.<sup>30</sup> Having perceived earth as earth:<sup>31</sup>

<sup>22</sup> “Grove,” *vana*. Comy says there are two kinds of groves: one that is planted and one that is self-sown or growing on its own (ie cultivated or wild). The cultivated groves were the Bamboo Grove (*veḷu, vana*), Jeta’s Grove, etc; the wild groves were the Dark Woods (*andha, vana*), the Great Grove (*mahā, vana*), Añjana Grove, and Subhaga Grove (MA 1:11). The Chinese version of the sutta agrees on this venue, 優迦羅 (EĀ 44.6 = T2.766a-b).

<sup>23</sup> Ukkaṭṭhā was a town in Kosala near the Himalayas. It was given as a fief (*brahma, deyya*) to Pokkharasāti by Pasenadi of Kosala in recognition of the former’s skills. It was densely populated and had much grassland, woodland and maize (D 1:87; DA 1:245). When the Buddha was staying in the Ichā,naṅgala woods nearby, Pokkharasāti first sent his pupil Ambaṭṭha and then went himself to see the Buddha (D 3/1:87 ff). Ukkaṭṭhā was connected by road to Setavyā (A 2:37), along which the youth Chatta of Setavyā travelled to learn from Pokkharasāti at Ukkaṭṭhā (Vv 5.3; VvA 229). The same road also led to Vesālī (J 2:259).

<sup>24</sup> “Exposition,” *pariyāya*. Comy: The word occurs in the texts in the sense of teaching (*desanā*), cause (*kaṛaṇa*), and occasion, time or turn (*vāra*). Here it has the meaning of **teaching and cause**. Ñāṇamoli’s *Glossary* gives the following definitions: (1) metaphor, figure of speech; (2) manner, way, method; (3) presentation, discourse [def. MA 1:18, 89]; (4) p[accatta]-vacana [nominative case]—paraphrase: KhpA 16.

<sup>25</sup> “The exposition on the root of all things,” *sabba, dhamma, mūla, pariyāya*. This is the sutta’s full title (MA 1:16 f). It refers to the special condition that maintains the continuity of the process of cyclic existence. The Majjhima Tikā explains this to be craving, conceit and views, that is, the roots of mental conceiving (*maññanā*) or mental proliferation (*papañca*) (Nm 280; Vbh 393; Nett 37 f). PED defines *maññanā* as “conceit”; Ñāṇamoli (1994:83): “conceit, conceiving”; CPED: “imagination, illusion.” See **Madhu, piṇḍika S** (M 18.15-19/1:111-113) & Bodhi 1980:49 f.

<sup>26</sup> “The ignorant ordinary person,” *assutavā puthujjana*, is the common person of the world who has neither learning nor spiritual maturity in the Dharma of the noble ones, and allows himself to be dominated by the various defilements and wrong views. Cf M 1:7, 135, 3:17; S 3:3, 113; Dhs 1003, 1217. See Bodhi 1980:40-46.

<sup>27</sup> “The noble ones,” *ariya*, that is, Buddhas, Pratyeka Buddhas, and the saints of the Path. See foll n.

<sup>28</sup> “True persons,” *sappurisā*, usually refer to the Pratyeka Buddhas and the saints (SA 2:251). In this case the Buddhas alone are regarded as the “noble ones” (MA 1:21, 24; Nc 76; DhsA 349). On a worldly level, virtuous disciples such as those who respect their parents are called “true persons” (AA 3:251).

<sup>29</sup> “Perceives,” *sañjānāti*, here it refers to a sense-experience before it is “value-added,” ie, before the mind filters, shapes and colours it. However, in the case of one who is spiritually weak, even at this stage such a conscious experience could still be biased by wrong view, esp taking the impermanent to be permanent, the painful as pleasurable, the not self as having an abiding entity. However, this negative tendency becomes strongly habituated at the

he conceives<sup>32</sup> (himself as) earth;  
 he conceives (himself) in earth;  
 he conceives (himself apart) from earth;  
 he conceives, ‘Earth is mine’

—he delights in earth.

Why is that? Because he lacks full understanding,<sup>33</sup> I say.

**4** He perceives **water** as water. Having perceived water as water:

he conceives (himself as) water;  
 he conceives (himself) in water;  
 he conceives (himself apart) from water;  
 he conceives, ‘Water is mine’

—he delights in water.

Why is that? Because he lacks full understanding, I say.

**5** He perceives **fire** as fire. Having perceived fire as fire:

he conceives (himself as) fire;  
 he conceives (himself) in fire;  
 he conceives (himself apart) from fire;  
 he conceives, ‘Fire is mine’

—he delights in fire.

Why is that? Because he lacks full understanding, I say.

**6** He perceives **wind [air]** as wind [air]. Having perceived wind as wind:

he conceives (himself as) wind;  
 he conceives (himself) in wind;  
 he conceives (himself apart) from wind;  
 he conceives, ‘Wind is mine’

“conceiving” (*maññanā*) level. While the ordinary person is said to “perceive” (*sañjānāti*) each of the elements or the spheres, the noble learner (*sekha*) [27n] is said to “directly know” (*abhijānāti*) them. The learner knows them as they really are through direct knowledge that they are impermanent, unsatisfactory and not self. See foll 3 nn.

<sup>30</sup> “He perceives earth as earth.” *paṭhavim paṭhavito sañjānāti*. “Although perceiving ‘earth as earth’ seems to suggest seeing an object as it really is, the aim of Buddhist insight meditation, the context makes it clear that the ordinary person’s perception of ‘earth as earth’ already introduces a slight distortion of the object, a distortion that will be blown up into full-fledged misinterpretation when the cognitive process enters the phase of ‘conceiving.’” (M:ÑB 1162 n5). Comy explains that the ordinary person seizes upon the conventional expression “it is earth,” and applying this to the object, perceives it through a “perversion of perception” (*saññā vipallāsa*) (MA 1:25). The term *vipallāsa* refers to the perceiving of the impermanent as permanent, the painful as pleasurable, the not-self as self, and the foul as beautiful (A 4.49/2:52). See M 1:185, 329, 421; Vism 352.

<sup>31</sup> Comy says that there are 4 wrong ways of regarding the body due to mental conceivings and false views: (1) he sees physical form as self; (2) he sees self in physical form; (3) he thinks self is other than physical form; (4) he sees self as having physical form or physical form as in self (MA 1:31). The first is an annihilationist view; the rest are eternalist views. A simpler (and more common) application these four self-views is found in such suttas as **Pāri-leyya S** (S 22.81/3:94-99).

<sup>32</sup> “He conceives,” *maññati*, “he thinks.” This is the predominant verb here. The verb *maññati* is often used in the Pali Suttas to refer to distorted thinking, that is, ascribing to an object or experience characteristics and significance that are not derived from that object or experience, but from one’s own subjective imaginings (*maññanā*). “The cognitive distortion introduced by conceiving consists, in brief, in the intrusion of the egocentric perspective into the experience already slightly distorted by spontaneous perception.” (M:ÑB 1162 n6). Comy explains that **the 3 types of conceiving** (*maññanā*) can be applied here in this manner: (1) when a person is attached to beings as a result of sight, hearing, etc or desires rebirth in a certain class of beings, this is conceiving due to craving; (2) when he regards himself as “superior,” “inferior” or “equal” with others, this is conceiving due to conceit; (3) when he thinks, “Beings are permanent, stable, etc,” this is conceiving due to views. (MA 1:26, 32). For a shorter version of this teaching, see for example **Nakula, pitā S** (S 22.1/ 3:1-5).

<sup>33</sup> “Lack of full understanding,” *apariññāta*. See Intro (3).

—he delights in wind.

Why is that? Because he lacks full understanding, I say. [2]

### Beings and gods

7 He perceives **beings**<sup>34</sup> as beings. Having perceived beings as beings:

he conceives beings;

he conceives (himself) in beings;

he conceives (himself apart) from beings;

he conceives, ‘Beings are mine’

—he delights in beings.

Why is that? Because he lacks full understanding, I say.

8 He perceives **gods**<sup>35</sup> as gods. Having perceived gods as gods:

he conceives gods;

he conceives (himself) in gods;

he conceives (himself apart) from gods;

he conceives, ‘Gods are mine’

—he delights in gods.

Why is that? Because he lacks full understanding, I say.

## II. THE DHYANA-ATTAINER

### The 1<sup>st</sup>-dhyana sphere

9 He perceives **Prajāpati**<sup>36</sup> as Pajāpati. Having perceived Prajāpati as Prajāpati:

he conceives Prajāpati;

he conceives (himself) in Prajāpati;

he conceives (himself apart) from Prajāpati;

he conceives, ‘Prajāpati is mine’

—he delights in Prajāpati.

Why is that? Because he lacks full understanding, I say.

10 He perceives **Brahmā**<sup>37</sup> as Brahmā. Having perceived Brahmā as Brahmā:

he conceives Brahmā;

he conceives (himself) in Brahmā;

<sup>34</sup> “Beings,” *bhūta*. Comy says that here “beings” signifies only living beings below the heaven of the Four Great Kings, the lowest of the Sense-sphere heavens. The higher levels of beings are designated by the terms that follow. Qu Vbh 354. See §3 & n.

<sup>35</sup> “Gods,” *devā*. Comy says that “gods” here refers to the six sense-sphere heavens, except for Māra and his retinue in the Para,nimmita,vasavatti heaven. On cosmology, see eg M:ÑB Intro 45-48.

<sup>36</sup> “Pajāpati,” in Skt, Prajā,pati (“lord of creation”). “Several hymns of the tenth book of the R̥g-veda deal with the creation or evolution of the cosmos through entities or divinities newly devised to account for it. Among such entities we meet a Golden Embryo (Hiraṇya,garbha) out of whom the universe emanated, a god called All-Maker (Viśva,karman), a feminine entity called Voice or Sound (Vāc), and Time (Kāla). The first two divinities were consolidated into a new god called **Prajāpati**, the Lord of Progeny, conceived of as the father of the gods and of all things whatever.” (Basham 1989:22). In due course, by the time of the Mahābharata, Prajāpati’s position was taken over by Brahmā who was generally recognized as the creator and protector of the world” (Basham 1989:74). Comy however says that Pajāpati here is a name for Māra the evil one because he is the ruler of this generation (*pajā*) made up of living beings (MA 1:33 f). In contemporary terms, this would include the belief in a theistic creator-god.

<sup>37</sup> “Brahmā” usually refers to Mahā Brahmā, the first deity to be reborn into the newly (re-)evolved universe at the beginning of the world-cycle (*kappa*) and whose life-span lasts for the entire cycle or world-period. Here however, it is used in a generic sense to include Brahmā’s Ministers (*brahma,purohitā*) and Brahmā’s Assembly (*brahma,pārisajja*) (MA 1:35). These three classes of beings are reborn according to their respectively strong, medium and full experience of the 1<sup>st</sup> dhyana (BDict: deva).

he conceives (himself apart) from Brahmā;  
he conceives, ‘Brahmā is mine’  
—he delights in Brahmā.  
Why is that? Because he lacks full understanding, I say.

### The 2<sup>nd</sup>-dhyana sphere

11 He perceives **the gods of Ābhassarā [streaming radiance]**<sup>38</sup> as the gods of Ābhassarā. Having perceived the Ābhassarā gods as the Ābhassarā gods:  
he conceives the Ābhassarā gods;  
he conceives (himself) in the Ābhassarā gods;  
he conceives (himself apart) from the Ābhassarā gods;  
he conceives, ‘the Ābhassarā gods are mine’  
—he delights in the Ābhassarā gods.  
Why is that? Because he lacks full understanding, I say.

### The 3<sup>rd</sup>-dhyana sphere

12 He perceives **the gods of Subhā,kiṇṇā [radiant glory]**<sup>39</sup> as the gods of Subhā,kiṇṇā. Having perceived the Subhā,kiṇṇā gods as the Subhā,kiṇṇā gods:  
he conceives the Subhā,kiṇṇā gods;  
he conceives (himself) in the Subhā,kiṇṇā gods;  
he conceives (himself apart) from the Subhā,kiṇṇā gods;  
he conceives, ‘The Subhā,kiṇṇā gods are mine’  
—he delights in the Subhā,kiṇṇā gods.  
Why is that? Because he lacks full understanding, I say.

### The 4<sup>th</sup>-dhyana sphere

13 He perceives **the gods of Veha-p,phalā [abundant fruit]**<sup>40</sup> as the gods of Veha-p,phalā. Having perceived the Veha-p,phalā gods as the Veha-p,phalā gods:  
he conceives the Veha-p,phalā gods;  
he conceives (himself) in the Veha-p,phalā gods;  
he conceives (himself apart) from the Veha-p,phalā gods;  
he conceives, ‘The Veha-p,phalā gods are mine’  
—he delights in the Veha-p,phalā gods.  
Why is that? Because he lacks full understanding, I say.  
14 He perceives **the Overlord [Abhibhū]**<sup>41</sup> as the Overlord. Having perceived the Overlord as the Overlord:

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<sup>38</sup> “The gods of streaming radiance” (*ābhassarā*). Comy: By mentioning these gods, all gods of the plane of the 2<sup>nd</sup> dhyana—that is, the gods of limited radiance (*parit’ābhā*) and the gods of immeasurable radiance (*appamāṇ’-ābhā*)—should be included, since they all occupy the same single plane. (MA 1:35). See **Saṅkhār’upapatti S** (M 120.19-22), where the generic term *abhā devā* (gods of Radiance) is used for all the three classes of gods here: see tr in SD 3.

<sup>39</sup> “The gods of radiant glory” (*subhā,kiṇṇā*), alt tr “the gods of refulgent glory.” By mentioning these gods, all gods of the plane of the 3<sup>rd</sup> dhyana—that is, the gods of limited glory (*paritta,subhā*) and the gods of Immeasurable glory (*paritta,subhā*)—should be included, since they all occupy the same single plane (MA 1:35). See **Saṅkhār’-upapatti S** (M 120.23-26), where the generic term *subhā deva* (gods of glory) is used for all the three classes of gods here: see SD 3.4.

<sup>40</sup> “The gods of abundant fruit,” (*veha-p,phalā*) abide in the 4<sup>th</sup> dhyana plane.

<sup>41</sup> “The Overlord” (*abhibhū*) or “Vanquisher” is the name of a deity as well as a class of gods in Veha-p,phalā. Comy says that this is a designation for the non-percipient beings (*asañña,sattā*) who abide in the 4<sup>th</sup> dhyana form plane. The realm is so called because “it vanquishes” (*abhibhavati*) the four formless aggregates [feeling, percep-

he conceives the Overlord;  
 he conceives (himself) in the Overlord;  
 he conceives (himself apart) from the Overlord;  
 he conceives, ‘The Overlord is mine’  
 —he delights in the Overlord.  
 Why is that? Because he lacks full understanding, I say.

### III. THE FORMLESS-SPHERE ATTAINERS

#### The formless spheres

**15** He perceives **the sphere of infinite space**<sup>42</sup> as the sphere of infinite space. Having perceived the sphere of infinite space as the sphere of infinite space:

he conceives the sphere of infinite space;  
 he conceives (himself) in the sphere of infinite space;  
 he conceives (himself apart) from the sphere of infinite space;  
 he conceives, ‘The sphere of infinite space is mine’  
 —he delights in the sphere of infinite space.

Why is that? Because he lacks full understanding, I say.

**16** He perceives **the sphere of infinite consciousness** as the sphere of infinite consciousness. Having perceived the sphere of infinite consciousness as the sphere of infinite consciousness: [3]

he conceives the sphere of infinite consciousness;  
 he conceives (himself) in the sphere of infinite consciousness;  
 he conceives (himself apart) from the sphere of infinite consciousness;  
 he conceives, ‘The sphere of infinite consciousness is mine’  
 —he delights in the sphere of infinite consciousness.

Why is that? Because he lacks full understanding, I say.

**17** He perceives **the sphere of nothingness** as the sphere of nothingness. Having perceived the sphere of nothingness as the sphere of nothingness:

he conceives the sphere of infinite consciousness;  
 he conceives (himself) in the sphere of nothingness;  
 he conceives (himself apart) from the sphere of nothingness;  
 he conceives, ‘The sphere of nothingness is mine’  
 —he delights in the sphere of nothingness.

Why is that? Because he lacks full understanding, I say.

**18** He perceives **the sphere of neither perception nor non-perception** as the sphere of neither perception nor non-perception. Having perceived the sphere of neither perception nor non-perception as the sphere of neither perception nor non-perception:

he conceives the sphere of neither perception nor non-perception;  
 he conceives (himself) in the sphere of neither perception nor non-perception;  
 he conceives (himself apart) from the sphere of neither perception nor non-perception;  
 he conceives, ‘The sphere of neither perception nor non-perception is mine’  
 —he delights in the sphere of neither perception nor non-perception.

Why is that? Because he lacks full understanding, I say.

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tion, mental formations, consciousness] (MA 1:35 f). M:ÑB however remarks that “The identification sounds contrived, especially because the word *abhibhū* is a masculine singular noun. [In **Brahma,nimantanika S** (M 49.5/1:327)] the word appears as part of Baka the Brahmā’s claim to theocratic hegemony, yet MA rejects identifying the Abhibhū with Brahmā here as a redundancy.” (M:ÑB 1165 n15). See Intro (5) above.

<sup>42</sup> “The sphere of infinite space” (*ākāsānañ,c’āyatana*). This and the next three sections [15-18] deal with mental conceiving in relation to the formless realms, the cosmological counterpart of the four formless attainments. The division on conceiving by way of planes or sphere (*āyatana*) ends with §18.

#### IV. THE 4 MODES OF PERCEPTION<sup>43</sup>

**19** He perceives **the seen** as the seen. Having perceived the seen as the seen:

he conceives (himself as) the seen;  
he conceives (himself) in the seen;  
he conceives (himself apart) from the seen;  
he conceives, 'The seen is mine'

—he delights in the seen.

Why is that? Because he lacks full understanding, I say.

**20** He perceives **the heard** as the heard. Having perceived the heard as the heard:

he conceives (himself as) the heard;  
he conceives (himself) in the heard;  
he conceives (himself apart) from the heard;  
he conceives, 'The heard is mine'

—he delights in the heard.

Why is that? Because he lacks full understanding, I say.

**21** He perceives **the sensed**<sup>44</sup> as the sensed. Having perceived the sensed as the sensed:

he conceives (himself as) the sensed;  
he conceives (himself) in the sensed;  
he conceives (himself apart) from the sensed;  
he conceives, 'The sensed is mine'

—he delights in the sensed.

Why is that? Because he lacks full understanding, I say.

**22** He perceives **the cognized** as the cognized. Having perceived the cognized as the cognized:

he conceives (himself as) the cognized;  
he conceives (himself) in the cognized;  
he conceives (himself apart) from the cognized;  
he conceives, 'The cognized is mine'

—he delights in the cognized.

Why is that? Because he lacks full understanding, I say.

#### V. THE MODES OF PERSONAL IDENTITY<sup>45</sup>

**23** He perceives **unity** as unity. Having perceived unity as unity:

he conceives (himself as) unity;  
he conceives (himself) in unity;  
he conceives (himself apart) from unity;  
he conceives, 'Unity is mine'

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<sup>43</sup> The 4 passages of this section deal with conceiving through the objects of the 4 means of perception—seeing, hearing, sensing and cognizing—that is, the seen (*diṭṭha*), the heard (*suta*), the sensed (*muta*) and the cognized (*viññāta*). Here, the “**sensed**” (*muta*) comprises the data of smell, taste and touch; “**cognized**,” the data of introspection, abstract thought and imagination. The objects of perception are “conceived” when they are cognized in terms of “this is mine,” “I am this” and “this is my self” or in other ways that generate craving, conceit and views, which in turn fuel such conceivings. See *Diṭṭha Suta Muta Viññāta* = SD 53.5.

<sup>44</sup> “Sensed,” *muta*, see prec n.

<sup>45</sup> In the first two sections [19-20] of this division, the perception of personal identity is dealt with in two ways: by way of unity and diversity. Comy explains that the emphasis on **unity** or oneness (*ekatta*) is characteristic of one who attains the dhyanas (*jhāna*) in which the mind occurs in a single mode on a single object. The emphasis of **diversity** (*nānatta*) is characteristic of the non-attainer who lack the profound experience of dhyana. (MA 1:37 f). Conceivings that are centred around diversity are expressed in philosophies of pluralism; conceivings focussed on unity are found in philosophies of monism.

—he delights in unity (as identity).

Why is that? Because he lacks full understanding, I say.

**24** He perceives **diversity** as diversity. Having perceived diversity as diversity:

he conceives (himself as) diversity;

he conceives (himself) in diversity;

he conceives (himself apart) from diversity;

he conceives, ‘Diversity is mine’

—he delights in diversity (as identity).

Why is that? Because he lacks full understanding, I say.

**25** He perceives **(the) all** as all.<sup>46</sup> Having perceived (the) all as all:

he conceives (himself as) all; **[4]**

he conceives (himself) in all;

he conceives (himself apart) from all;

he conceives, ‘The all is mine’

—he delights in all (as identity).

Why is that? Because he lacks full understanding, I say.

**26** He perceives **nirvana** as nirvana.<sup>47</sup> Having perceived nirvana as nirvana:

he conceives (himself as) nirvana;

he conceives (himself) in nirvana;

he conceives (himself apart) from nirvana;

he conceives, ‘Nirvana is mine’

—he delights in nirvana (as identity).

Why is that? Because he lacks full understanding, I say.

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<sup>46</sup> “All as all” (*sabbam sabbato*), lit “the all from the all.” In this section, all perceptions of personal identity are shown as singlefold. Such an idea can be the basis for pantheistic (“God is everywhere”) or monistic (“everything is one”) notions, depending on the relationship perceived between the self and the all. **Ṭhānissaro** makes an interesting observation here: “Although at present we rarely think in the same terms as the Samkhya philosophers, there has long been—and still is—a common tendency to create a ‘Buddhist’ metaphysics in which the experience of emptiness, the Unconditioned, the Dharma-body, Buddha-nature, rigpa, etc, is said to function as the ground of being from which the ‘all’—the entirety of our sensory and mental experience—is said to spring and to which we return when we meditate. Some people think that these theories are the inventions of scholars without any direct meditative experience, but actually they have most often originated among meditators, who label (or in the words of the discourse, ‘perceive’) a particular meditative experience as the ultimate goal, identify with it in a subtle way (as when we are told that “we are the knowing”), and then view that level of experience as the ground of being out of which all other experience comes.” (M 1 tr Intro <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/canon/sutta/majjhima/mn001-tb0.html>)

<sup>47</sup> “Nirvana as nirvana” (*nibbānam nibbānato*), lit “nirvana from nirvana.” Comy says that nirvana here refers to the 5 kinds of “supreme nirvana here and now” (*parama, diṭṭha, dhamma, nibbāna*) of the 62 grounds for wrong view listed in **Brahmajāla S** (D 1.3.19-25/1:36-38), ie nirvana identified with the total enjoyment of sense-pleasures or with each of the 4 dhyanas. Craving causes one to enjoy this state or to lust after it. Conceit causes one to pride oneself as having attained it. Views makes one conceive of this illusory nirvana to be permanent, pleasurable and as an abiding self. (MA 1:38).

## V. THE LEARNER ON THE PATH<sup>48</sup>

### The 4 elements

27 Here, bhikshus, a monk who is a learner, whose mind has not won the goal, and who is still aspiring to win the supreme security from bondage, perceives **earth** as earth.<sup>49</sup> Having perceived earth as earth:

- he should not conceive (himself as) earth;
- he should not conceive (himself) in earth;
- he should not conceive (himself apart) from earth;
- he should not conceive, 'Earth is mine'

—he should not delight in earth.

Why is that? So that he would have full understanding (*pariññeyya*), I say.<sup>50</sup>

- 28 He perceives water as water...
- 29 He perceives fire as fire...
- 30 He perceives wind [air] as wind [air]...
- 31 He perceives beings as beings...
- 32 He perceives gods as gods...
- 33 He perceives Prajāpati as Prajāpati...
- 34 He perceives Brahmā as Brahmā...
- 35 He perceives the Ābhassarā gods as the Ābhassarā gods...
- 36 He perceives the Subhā,kinnā gods as the Subhā,kiṇṇā gods...
- 37 He perceives the Vaha-p.phalā gods as the Vaha-p.phalā gods...
- 38 He perceives the Overlord as the Overlord...
- 39 He perceives the sphere of infinite space as the sphere of infinite space...
- 40 He perceives the sphere of infinite consciousness as the sphere of infinite consciousness...
- 41 He perceives the sphere of nothingness as the sphere of nothingness...
- 42 He perceives the sphere of neither perception nor non-perception as the sphere of neither perception nor non-perception...
- 43 He perceives the seen as the seen...
- 44 He perceives the heard as the heard...
- 45 He perceives the sensed as the sensed...
- 46 He perceives the cognized as the cognized...
- 47 He perceives unity as unity...
- 48 He perceives diversity as diversity...
- 49 He perceives all as all...
- 50 He perceives nirvana as nirvana. Having perceived nirvana as nirvana:

<sup>48</sup> "Learner on the path," *sekha*, alt tr "trainee," that is, a noble learner, a disciple in the higher training, a saint on the path to awakening. On a simple, the term applies to any of the three types of saint not yet an arhat, ie the stream-winner, the once-returned and the non-returned. Technically, in terms of the path and fruition, there are 7 such learners or saints, except for the arhat who has won fruition (*arahatta,phala*), who is "beyond training" (*asekha*, ie "non-learner"). The ordinary person is in this context called "one who is neither learner nor non-learner" (*ne'va sekha nāsekha*). Cf Pug 23-25.

<sup>49</sup> While the ordinary person is said to "perceive" (*sañjānāti*) each of the elements or the spheres, the noble learner is said to "directly know" (*abhiñānāti*) them. The learner knows them as they really are through direct knowledge that they are impermanent, unsatisfactory and not self. See §3 n on "perceives."

<sup>50</sup> Conceiving and delighting should be avoided because the dispositions connected with such mental processes linger on within us. The learner on the path refrains from such conceiving and delighting so as to gain a full understanding (*pariññā*) of the noble truths. On becoming a stream-winner, we eradicate the fetter of identity-view (*sakkāya diṭṭhi*) and thus no longer conceive in terms of wrong view (esp greed and hate). However, the subtler defilements of craving and conceit are only uprooted when we attain arhathood. As such, the learner might still fall into mental conceiving. Like the arhat, the learner has direct knowledge (*abhiññā*), but only the arhat has full understanding (*pariññā*), which entails the total abandonment of all defilements (greed, hate and delusion). See MA 1:42.

he should not conceive (himself as) nirvana;  
 he should not conceive (himself) in nirvana;  
 he should not conceive (himself apart) from nirvana;  
 he should not conceive, ‘Nirvana is mine’  
 —he should not delight in nirvana (as identity).  
 Why is that? So that he would have full understanding, I say.

## VII. THE ARHATS

### The arhat (1)—who has fully understood

**51** Here, bhikshus, a monk who is an arhat, with mental influxes destroyed,<sup>51</sup> who has lived the holy life, done what has to be done, laid down the burden,<sup>52</sup> reached his own goal, destroyed the fetters of being, liberated through right knowledge,<sup>53</sup> directly knows **earth** as earth. Having directly known earth as earth:

he does not conceive (himself as) earth;  
 he does not conceive (himself) in earth;  
 he does not conceive (himself apart) from earth;  
 he does not conceive, ‘Earth is mine’  
 —he does not delights in earth.  
 Why is that? Because he has full understanding (*pariññāta*), I say.<sup>54</sup>  
**52-74** He directly knows **water** as water...  
 ...**nirvana** as nirvana...  
 Why is that? Because he has full understanding, I say.

### The arhat (2)—freed from lust

**75** Here, bhikshus, a monk who is an arhat, with mental influxes destroyed,...liberated through right knowledge, **[5]** directly knows **earth** as earth. Having directly known earth as earth:

he does not conceive (himself as) earth;  
 he does not conceive (himself) in earth;  
 he does not conceive (himself apart) from earth;  
 he does not conceive, ‘Earth is mine’  
 —he does not delights in earth.  
 Why is that? Because he is freed from lust through the destruction of lust.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>51</sup> “Mental influxes destroyed,” *khīṇ’āsava*. The term *āsava* (lit “influxes”) comes from *ā-savati* “flows towards” (ie either “into” or “out” towards the observer). It has been variously translated as taints (“deadly taints,” RD), corruptions, intoxicants, biases, depravity, misery, evil (influences), or simply left untranslated. The Abhidhamma lists four *āsava*: the influx of (1) sense-desire (*kām’āsava*), (2) (desire for eternal) existence (*bhav’āsava*), (3) wrong views (*diṭṭh’āsava*), (4) ignorance (*avijjāsava*) (D 16.2.4, Pm 1.442, 561, Dhs §§1096-1100, Vbh §937). These four are also known as “floods” (*ogha*) and “yokes” (*yoga*). The list of three influxes (omitting the influx of views) [43] is probably older and is found more frequently in the Suttas (D 3:216, 33.1.10(20); M 1:55, 3:41; A 3.59, 67, 6.63). The destruction of these *āsavas* is equivalent to arhathood. See BDict under *āsava*.

<sup>52</sup> “Laid down the burden,” *ohīta, bhāra*. Comy mentions 3 kinds of burden: the aggregates (*khandha*); the mental defilements (*kilesa*); and formations (*abhisankhāra*) (MA 1:43). We are nothing but the 5 aggregates (form, feeling, perception, mental formations, consciousness); the mental defilements cause us suffering; the formations are karma that fuel our lives and rebirth.

<sup>53</sup> The preceding portion of this sentence is a stock description of the arhat. “Right knowledge” (*samma-d-aññā*), alt tr “final knowledge,” ie liberating wisdom that is the basis for arhathood.

<sup>54</sup> The arhat’s liberating knowledge is total in the sense that he fully understands the four noble truths through direct knowledge or higher self-knowledge (*abhiññā*). In this way, he eradicates even the subtlest disposition to craving and conceit, and as such no longer falls into conceiving and delighting.

**75-98** He directly knows **water** as water...

...**nirvana** as nirvana...

Why is that? Because he is freed from lust through the destruction of lust.

### The arhat (3)—freed from hate

**99** Here, bhikshus, a monk who is an arhat, with mental influxes destroyed,...liberated through direct knowledge, directly knows **earth** as earth. Having directly known earth as earth:

he does not conceive (himself as) earth;

he does not conceive (himself) in earth;

he does not conceive (himself apart) from earth;

he does not conceive, 'Earth is mine'

—he does not delights in earth.

Why is that? Because he is freed from hate through the destruction of hate.

**100-122** He directly knows **water** as water...

...**nirvana** as nirvana...

Why is that? Because he is freed from hate through the destruction of hate.

### The arhat (4)—freed from delusion

**123** Here, bhikshus, a monk who is Arhat, with mental influxes destroyed,...liberated through right knowledge, directly knows **earth** as earth. Having directly known earth as earth:

he does not conceive (himself as) earth;

he does not conceive (himself) in earth;

he does not conceive (himself apart) from earth;

he does not conceive, 'Earth is mine'

—he does not delights in earth.

Why is that? Because he is freed from delusion through the destruction of delusion.

**124-146** He directly knows **water** as water...

...**nirvana** as nirvana...

Why is that? Because he is freed from delusion through the destruction of delusion.

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<sup>55</sup> "Freed from lust through the destruction of lust," *khayā rāgassa vīta,rāgattā*. This phrase emphasizes the fact that the arhat is free from lust (*rāga*) not merely temporarily but permanently, leading to his spiritual freedom (*nissaraṇa nirodha*, Pm 1:27; Vism 410). This permanent ending refers to the other two unwholesome roots (hate and delusion) in the next two sections. Through full understanding, the arhat permanently destroys these 3 roots (by uprooting them), and as such does not fall into mental conceiving. The **Paṭisambhidā,magga** speaks of 5 kinds of extinction (*nirodha*) of mental defilements and distraction: (1) extinction by suppression (*vikkhambhana nirodha*); (2) extinction by substitution of opposites (*tad-aṅga nirodha*); (3) extinction by cutting off of destruction (*samuccheda nirodha*), ie at the moment of attaining the Path; (4) extinction by tranquillization (*paṭipassaddhi nirodha*), ie at the moment of the fruition on the Supramundane Path; (5) extinction by escape or liberation (*nissaraṇa nirodha*), that is, the attainment of nirvana. (Pm 1:27, 220 f; Vism 410; cf Vism 693). These 5 are also called abandonment (*pahāna*), liberation (*vimutti*), solitude (*viveka*), detachment or dispassion (*virāga*) or letting go or relinquishing (*vossagga*).

## VIII. THE TATHAGATA

The Tathāgata (1)—who has fully understood

147 Bhikshus, the Tathāgata [Buddha Thus Come],<sup>56</sup> worthy (*araham*) [the Arhat], fully self-awakened, directly knows **earth** as earth. Having directly known earth as earth:

- he does not conceive (himself as) earth;
- he does not conceive (himself) in earth;
- he does not conceive (himself apart) from earth;
- he does not conceive, ‘Earth is mine’

—he does not delight in earth. [6]

Why is that? Because he has the Tathāgata’s full understanding, I say.<sup>57</sup>

148-170 He directly knows **water** as water...

...**nirvana** as nirvana...

Why is that? Because he has the Tathāgata’s full understanding, I say.

The Tathāgata (2)—the perfect self-awakened one

171 Bhikshus, the Tathāgata [Buddha Thus Come], worthy (*araham*) [the arhat], fully self-awakened, directly knows **earth** as earth. Having directly known earth as earth:

- he does not conceive (himself as) earth;
- he does not conceive (himself) in earth;
- he does not conceive (himself apart) from earth;
- he does not conceive, ‘Earth is mine’

—he does not delight in earth.

Why is that? Because he knows thus: ‘Delight is the root of suffering.’ And that on account of being, there is birth; that having come into being, there is decay and death.<sup>58</sup>

Therefore, bhikshus, through the complete destruction of craving, through fading away [of lust],<sup>59</sup> through cessation [of suffering],<sup>60</sup> through letting go [of defilements],<sup>61</sup> the Tathāgata has awakened to perfect self-awakening, I say!

172-194 He directly knows **water** as water...

<sup>56</sup> “**Tathāgata.**” This is the most common way in which the Buddha refers to himself. Comys (eg MA 1:45) usually give 8 explanations of this epithet, two of which are most common: (1) “thus come” (*tathā āgata*), that is, one who *comes* into our midst with the message of deathlessness; (2) “thus gone” (*tathā gata*), that is, one who has *gone* that same way by his own practice of the path. See M:ÑB 24 & Bodhi (tr), *Discourse on the All-embracing Net of Views*, 1978:331-344.

<sup>57</sup> “The Tathāgata’s full understanding,” *pariññātan taṃ tathāgatassa*. PTS ed omits *taṃ*. Comy glosses *pariññāta* as “fully understood to the conclusion, fully understood to the limit, fully understood without remainder.” While the Buddhas and arhat disciples are alike in abandoning all defilements, there is a distinction in their range of full understanding. While the disciple attain nirvana after understanding with insight only a limited number of formations, Buddhas fully understand all formations without exception (MA 1:52).

<sup>58</sup> This sentence is a very compact statement of dependent arising (*paṭicca samuppāda*), usually expounded in 12 factors (eg **Mahā Tapā,saṅkhaya S**, M 38). Comy explains that “delight or delighting” (*nandī*) is the craving of the previous life that brings about the suffering of the 5 aggregates in the present life; “being” (*bhava*) the karmically determinative aspect of the present life that causes future birth, followed by future decay and death. This passage shows the Buddha destroyed mental conceiving through his penetration of dependent origination on the night of his awakening (MA 1:52 f). The mention of “delight” (*nandī*) as the root of suffering reflects the sutta’s title. “Moreover, by referring to the earlier statement that the ordinary person delights in earth, etc, it shows suffering to be the ultimate consequence of delight.” (M:ÑB 1168 n29).

<sup>59</sup> “Fading away [of lust]” (*virāga*), alt tr “dispassion” (see §21).

<sup>60</sup> That is, “cessation of suffering” (*nirodha*) (see §21).

<sup>61</sup> MA says that there are 2 kinds of letting go or relinquishment (of suffering) (*vossagga*): “giving up” (*pariccāga*), i.e. the abandonment of defilements, and “entering into” (*pakkhandana*), i.e. culminating in nirvana.

...**nirvana** as nirvana...

Why is that? Because he knows thus: ‘Delight is the root of suffering.’ And that on account of being, there is birth; that having come into being, there is decay and death.

Therefore, bhikkhus, through the complete destruction of craving, through fading away [of lust], through cessation [of suffering], through letting go [of defilements], the Tathāgata has awakened to perfect self-awakening, I say!<sup>62</sup>

This is what the Blessed One said. The monks did not joyfully approve of the Blessed One’s word.<sup>63</sup>

— evaṃ —

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<sup>62</sup> Comy says that the Tathāgata does not conceive earth and does not delight in earth because he has understood that delight is the root of suffering. Further, by understanding origination dependent arising, he has completely destroyed craving here called “delight,” and awakened to full self-awakening (MA 1:54).

<sup>63</sup> Se *Na attamaṇā te bhikkhū Bhagavato bhāsitaṃ abhinandun ti*. Be omits *attamaṇā*. PTS ed has wr: *Attamaṇā te bhikkhū Bhagavato bhāsitaṃ abhinandun ti*. See Intro (6).

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